

In September 2004, as a part of the New Schools Project, Easley also launched the *Learn and Earn* early college high schools initiative. *Learn and Earn* high schools provide students with an opportunity to graduate in five years with a high school diploma and an associate's degree or two years of college credit, which prepare them for high-skill jobs in new and emerging industries. The New Schools Project administers funding to 33 *Learn and Earn* high schools currently in operation in the state. Twenty additional *Learn and Earn* schools are slated to open in 2007.

During his address, Easley also said when government leaders pursue policies out of political expediency the consequences can shift risk and burden onto those facing economic hardships, put soldiers at risk in the field and jeopardize security at home.

"When 5,000 North Carolina National Guard soldiers were sent to Iraq, they arrived to find that Washington had not provided the equipment they needed and expected to accomplish their mission. More of our North Carolina Guard have been deployed overseas than from virtually any other state," Easley said. "Our state ordered and shipped the equipment they needed, were promised and did not receive, when it was time to fight."

The struggle for partisan advantage, particularly in the nation's capital, too often overshadows the national interest.

"Too many in Washington have forgotten their core principles and left many Americans in their wake," said Easley. "There is too little concern for the common good and too much interest in partisan politics. They lack respect for the 'weak and vulnerable' and show a lack of attention to decisions that will affect Americans for decades to come. They are focused more on future elections and less on future generations."

"Without a clear commitment to a set of values that guides policy, we make inconsistent decisions, contradictory judgments, and bad choices," said Easley. "American values are embedded in the integrity of our institutions, in the fairness of our policies, and in the character of our people."

The University of Notre Dame, founded in 1842, is an independent, national Catholic university located at South Bend, Ind. with an enrollment of 11,400 undergraduate and graduate students. Notre Dame regularly brings those prominent in public life to discuss policy and public service.

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NOTE: *The prepared text of Gov. Easley's lecture is attached.*